

# 1 & 2 PETER Bible Reading Schedule

## 2 Weeks

### WEEK 1

Peter expresses himself so well; his teachings in these two letters are some of the most significant words for us to follow. Plus, you will probably observe that his attitude is a bit different than what we read in the Gospels. The Lord has used his failure to soften his heart. Peter is now an example of humility. We will read Peter's words for the next two weeks.

#### DAY ONE – 1 Peter 1

Clearly, Peter is concerned for his fellow believers as many are suffering and facing persecution. God's people have been scattered about which makes lives even more challenging but also reflective of the way that the Lord spread the Gospel. Verses 3 to 9 are some of my favorites. I often read these words to believers who find themselves in the hospital with various medical problems. I think the key verses are six and seven (worth memorizing): "There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold." Peter will refer to the opposition and difficulties of life throughout his letter as opportunities to shine the light of Christ through our endurance and good behavior. This is contrary to what people would expect from someone going through hard times. Because of the certainty of our salvation, Peter raises the bar for holy living and godly character. What would you highlight from Peter about the marvelous salvation we have received in Christ? I want to emphasize the greatness of our salvation because that is what Peter emphasizes first. Then, he calls us to holy living in verses 13 through 20. Also, God has supplied us with his unchanging word, "the Word of the Lord remains forever." (V25) There's no question about the God-inspired nature of Peter's message in this chapter. I am noticing more than half a dozen places in these 25 verses where I could camp out with reflection, contemplation, and prayer. What might the Spirit of God be pinpointing for you in this first chapter? I have felt led to meditate on verse 8 which reminds me to trust the Lord no matter what. This leads to inexpressible joy. You can see why I chose Peter's letters to follow our Easter/resurrection celebration. Joy leads to obedience... AMEN!

#### DAY TWO – 1 Peter 2

Peter reminds me of Matthew because he quotes the Old Testament in every chapter of this letter just like we read in the Gospel of Matthew. In Acts 2 Peter gives this amazing sermon on Pentecost as 3000 people say "yes" to Jesus and are baptized. In that sermon, he does the same thing by quoting the O.T. three specific times in his speech verifying that Jesus was/is the Messiah. Again, the forerunner for godly behavior is the certainty of who we are in Christ. Peter shares these inspiring words from verses 5 to 10. You are chosen, priests, holy, and God's own possession. He called you and me out of the darkness into his wonderful light. We are even called "foreigners and aliens," in this present world. I resonant with

being “chosen” as I think of the new series entitled, “The Chosen.” I know that title mostly refers to Jesus but I believe he has made it clear that we are chosen as well. I mentioned in my notes yesterday that we are called, as God’s chosen people, to live lives that reflect him in a skeptical and cynical world. “Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.” (V12) I would suggest that this is the central theme of the letter: “Christians living in hostile territory need to live out the principles of the Good News so that they can win other people to the Lord.” Peter shares this emphasis several times in different ways. His key statement about this principle is found in 3:15-16 which I will be sure to highlight tomorrow. These two verses are worth memorizing, for sure. (Why not start today and review tomorrow!) Beginning in verse 21, Peter challenges our thinking about suffering, reminding us that Jesus suffered. Peter quotes Isaiah 53 which is fresh in my memory since I was looking at those amazing verses during Easter week about the “Suffering Servant.” Peter’s words seem so relevant to me with more opposition to Christianity in our world and the need to show our faith, not just tell our faith. How do you respond to the timeless words of Peter today?

#### DAY 3 – 1 Peter 3

This is a very practical chapter, in my thinking. I am surprised that Psalm 34:12-16 also fits so well as Peter gives instructions for Christian living beginning in verse 8. Previous to that, marriage is highlighted. I imagine that there were more wives who embraced the Christian faith than husbands just like it is today. The wives needed more encouragement as Peter essentially said, “Don’t give up!” Eventually, your husband will see Christ in you and put their trust in God. On the other hand, the husband is called to serve his wife and treat her with kindness. This instruction is also very practical. But verses 15 & 16 stand out to me. I have memorized them in the NIV. “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.” Verses 19 through 21 have been difficult to interpret. It does seem to say that Christ was the One who was preaching to the imprisoned spirits which is most often thought of as demons. I have concluded that Christ proclaimed his victory over the evil spiritual powers after his resurrection (verse 19). Baptism is never taught as what saves the believer (verse 21). The symbol of Noah and his family being doused by the flooding waters might be the idea of baptism as they are saved. But as verse 21 concludes, baptism is tied to our response to God with a clean conscience. This makes it clear that only those who exercise faith in God will benefit from baptism. Verse 22 is a strong conclusion to these confusing verses with Christ having won the victory over these spiritual powers. Suffering, opposition, spiritual attack, and even death have no power to dismantle us spiritually because we are connected to the One who has authority over them all. (Romans 8:38-39) What practical instruction caught your eye in today’s reading?

#### DAY 4 – 1 Peter 4

Peter’s letter addresses suffering and persecution as we face people hostile to our faith. Peter gives helpful instructions, especially in this chapter. Beginning in verse 12, he tells us not to be surprised when suffering comes our way (4:12). Christians are called to live a counter-cultural lifestyle in obedience to God. We can expect opposition, discrimination, false charges, and even violence. But God has a purpose

for us in suffering (4:13). We share in fellowship with Christ who suffered. So then, we can be confident of enjoying the glory that he has already won for us. We need to commit ourselves to doing what is right when we face suffering (4:19). Our loving response to enemies in the midst of trials can be a powerful opportunity to share our faith. By treating our persecutors with love and kindness, we can make our faith respectable and even attractive to them. We need to remember in our trials that God is both sovereign and faithful. He controls all the circumstances of life, and we don't need to fear that a trial will come our way apart from God's oversight or will. How do you respond to Peter's teaching on suffering? The other noteworthy topic in this chapter refers to the gifts the Lord gives us for his service. Verse 10 says, "God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts." That tells us that every believer has at least one spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit. The two aspects of gifts are addressed with these questions: "Do you have the gift of speaking?" "Do you have the gift of helping others?" What you say, inspired by God, can make an incredible difference in someone's life. That is also true of how you can help others by serving them. This is about ministering in word and deed. Both are so important. Sometimes believers think that their gift of serving is not as important as the gift of speaking. But God has a purpose for each. How do verses 10 & 11 inspire you to use your spiritual gift(s)?

#### DAY 5 – 1 Peter 5

Oftentimes, the final exhortations in the Epistles are especially practical and down to earth. Leadership, humility, spiritual warfare, and remaining strong are all helpful words of encouragement that apply to everyday living. The first four verses have been essential for me as a pastor/leader helping other leaders honor the Lord in serving the flock of God. Leaders are never called to do it on their own. "As a fellow elder..." (V1) leaders are called to link arms with other leaders as Peter demonstrates in these first few verses. Sometimes leaders aspire to be on the top and in control. Verse 3, "Don't lord it over people assigned to your care." As has been said, "It's lonely at the top." That's because God never meant for us to lead like that. Leadership is best done through teamwork, Amen!? Humility is the answer... "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (V5) Peter's next topic is summarized in two verses but it is a much more expansive subject. The opposition of the devil is a well-documented aspect of the Christian life. Jesus even warned Peter during the Last Supper of how the devil would try to influence him, "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So, when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:31) I think Peter is remembering these words from the Lord as he writes verses 8 & 9 in our chapter. Jesus is obviously referring to Peter's denial which God would use to humble Peter. The Peter we are reading from is a transformed man through humility. He would have never elevated humility in his younger days, but now he mentions it several times in his letter. I hope you have gleaned insights and encouragement from this week's readings in 1 Peter. We will continue next week in 2 Peter. Which specific exhortation caught your eye? Why?

## WEEK 2

The second letter from Peter is just three chapters long; I will stay with the pattern I use by having us read one chapter a day. There are several significant truths that Peter shares in this letter. One of his main themes will be the return of Christ. But before that, we read about his highlights on the importance of spiritual growth, the inspiration of God's Word, the danger of false teaching, and the call to godliness. In eight days, we will have covered a lot of ground all from the pen of Peter.

### DAY 6 – 2 Peter 1

This is the sixth day of reading from Peter's letters. I think this first chapter is marvelous. He tells us about the gift of God's divine nature in us and then gives a very practical progression of spiritual growth in verses 5 through 7. He tells us about his motivation to remind them of these truths and pledges to remind them "as long as I live." (V13) We know that we need reminders, for sure. His testimony about the "transfiguration" (Matthew 17:1-9) is special to me because he has a vivid memory of that event even though it had taken place about 30 years previously (VV16-18). And you might expect him to elevate the Word of God because of how often he quoted it in his first letter. Verses 20 & 21 announce that our foundation of faith is found in God's Word. You can see why I appreciate this chapter so much. But let's look more closely at this progression in verses 5 to 7. It begins with faith, which isn't surprising since our first step as a believer was a step of faith. Genuine faith is transformative and leads a changed life with concern for moral goodness. Increased knowledge, which is closely connected to knowing God, must be a continuous pursuit in the believer's life. A very important virtue that reveals God's hand at work in your life is self-control. Do you agree? Whenever I ask someone which "fruit of the Spirit" should grow in their lives, self-control is often at the top of the list. Peter follows this virtue with perseverance, and you can sense the spiritual strength of the Lord growing in a person's life with these qualities becoming stronger. Godliness, brotherly love, and agape love are the last three and serve as the pinnacle of spiritual maturity. Is there any argument about that? And listen to what Peter wrote after sharing this list: "For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (V8, NIV) What aspect of this chapter caught your attention? How would you assess your progress as a growing believer?

### DAY 7 – 2 Peter 2

You might think that false teaching is a thing of the past but you would be wrong. Rob Bell wrote a book entitled. "Love Wins." In the book from 2011, he says hell is inconceivable which led to intense debate and a fallout of his pastoral ministry at Mars Hill, Grand Rapids. But the greatest harm is that he led many astray with his false teaching. I am sure many of you enjoy listening to Oprah Winfrey. But much of what she believes is heresy. I know that sounds so harsh but the fact is, her "ministry" is leading many astray. I could give you example after example about present-day false teaching. So, don't just think this was a 1st-century issue in the church. Now, the New Testament church was just beginning, so the judgment of God was sometimes very swift like Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 or Simon in Acts 8 who wanted to buy the power of God. Almost every writer from the Book of Acts onward wrote about false teaching. The harm of false teaching is two-fold; it confuses the people of God and it discredits God's truth among the masses. False teaching today may appear to be Christian with the result often being the

slander of the Christian faith (V2). Quite often, the biggest smear from false teachers is how they live. Peter emphasizes this in verses 10 to 16. Balaam was an Old Testament example of trying to earn money dishonestly at the expense of God's truth. For 22 verses, Peter addresses the depraved character and extreme harm that false teachers produce. How have you seen evidence of false teaching in our world? How have these descriptions that Peter gives in these verses warned you to be on your guard?

#### DAY 8 – 2 Peter 3

In the midst of Peter's message about the "Day of the Lord," there is an often-repeated promise about God's desire for all people to be saved. An emphasis in theology suggests that God chooses some but doesn't choose others, as if to say, the Lord only died for those who choose him. So, how do you understand 3:9? "The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise (to return again), as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed (literally, perish as to be condemned), but wants EVERYONE to repent." As God delays the return of His Son to earth, an opportunity remains for people to turn to the Lord in faith and be saved. The comparison of a 1000 years to one day fits for us since it has been 2000 years since Peter wrote these words. Obviously, God's perspective on time is different from that of human beings. Also, Peter gives us the impression that everything will be destroyed at the end, "but we are looking forward to the new heavens and the new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness." (V13) The Bible often refers to new heavens and new earth which is very exciting but also beyond our imagination. What do we learn from Peter's words about the coming of the Lord and the close of the age? What does Peter tell us to do as we wait for Christ's return? The last thing I noticed is Peter's reference to Paul. The New Testament tells us little about the relationship between Peter and Paul. Because of the dispute in Antioch (Galatians 2:11-14), it is sometimes thought that the two were hostile to one another, but these words give us a different sense. Peter and Paul essentially agreed about the Good News for the Gentiles which was especially significant (Acts 11:2-18; 15:7-11). Peter is affirming Paul's message as Scripture and worth digging into for truth and spiritual growth. Both apostles share in the fact that they were martyred in Rome during the same persecution by Nero in the mid-60s AD. Verse 18 says, may you grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. How is that happening in your life? How has God spoken to you through 2 Peter?